

COMMERCE

Global Blue opens Milan lounge as Italian duty-free surges

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Global Blue Lounge in Milan

By STAFF REPORTS

Tourists visiting Italy in the first two months of 2016 had an average transaction amount of \$831 at current exchange rates, per a report by Global Blue.

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In the same time frame, tax-free purchases in Italy increased by 6 percent in comparison to the year-ago, highlighting the European country as a tourist's preferred market to spend. Global Blue is a tax-free shopping agency that provides duty-free information to consumers visiting European markets and boasts a brand network of 270,000 shopping partners.

Duty-free short list

Low-cost travel rates, due to the popularity of budget airlines such as AirTran and EasyJet, are allowing middle class consumers the opportunity to venture abroad. While overseas and spending time at the airport, consumers have a penchant for shopping as a time killer and to take advantage of the tax- and duty-free retailing available ([see story](#)).

Global Blue's duty-free shopping report found that purchases made by Chinese tourists increased 10 percent. Japanese tourists were responsible for making the most costly purchases, with the average transaction totaling \$890, a 16 percent increase from the year-ago.

For tourists coming from the United States, the average transaction amount increased by 33 percent.

Global Blue's findings for the first two months of 2016 coincide with strong results from 2015. A year-ago, duty-free shopping in Italy grew 16 percent compared to 2014 and U.S. tourist purchases increased 56 percent.

The growth of U.S. duty-free purchases in Europe has offset the decrease in Russian tourists, who have dropped by 41 percent compared to years prior due to devaluation of the ruble, stagnant oil prices and other economic woes.

To coincide with its report, Global Blue has opened a high-end lounge on Via Santo Spirito in Milan. The street is within the Quadrilatero della Moda or "golden triangle" luxury shopping district, making its position ideal as tourists visit and make purchases.



Room within the Global Blue Lounge in Milan

This shop comes after the success of the temporary Global Blue lounge housed on Via della Spiga during the Milan Expo 2015. When visited, Global Blue will offer consumers hassle-free tax-refund services in a relaxing environment.

In addition to tax refunds, Global Blue's Lounge includes complimentary WiFi access and a dedicated shopping consultancy for tourists to get the most out of their visit to Milan. The outpost will be open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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